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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 000150

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [ECON](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: CABINET SHAKEUP GETS FIDEL'S SEAL OF APPROVAL

REF: HAVANA 140

Classified By: COM Jonathan Farrar for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) A "Reflexiones" piece in today's (3/4) edition of the Communist Party daily Granma put Fidel Castro's seal of approval on the surprisingly extensive changes to the cupola of the Cuban government announced on Monday. In a piece entitled "Healthy Changes in the Council of Ministers," Castro criticizes the international media for speculating that "Fidel's men" had been replaced by "Raul's men." Without a trace of irony, the Comandante goes on to claim that he had nothing to do with naming senior government officials anyway, that such nominations were the purview of the Council of State. Without naming names, he cites "the two mentioned in the press releases," a clear reference to former Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and still (for the moment) Vice President Carlos Lage, and says that ambition had gone to their heads and they had come to be seen favorably by the foreign enemy (the U.S.) With minimal transition, he then turns to a discussion of the World Baseball Classic, which is about to begin.

¶2. (C) COMMENT: The "Reflexiones" piece signed by Fidel effectively closes the door on any short term future for Perez Roque and Lage in the GOC. The latter may remain in place as Vice President, or see the writing on the wall and leave gracefully. It also shuts off any further open discussion in Cuba about Raul's authority. Coming close on the heels of reports in the press that Fidel has been seen walking in the neighborhood near his hospital, this "Reflexiones" seems to be part of an effort to show that Raul's decisions have the full backing of an alert and attentive Fidel Castro.

¶3. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: While the changes are extensive in a way that is almost revolutionary in Cuba, we believe they are essentially a conservative move on Raul's part. His focus has always been on trying to boost the economy, and these changes create an economic team that is absolutely loyal and responsive to him. There is no indication that they will be innovative thinkers, but we do not believe Raul is looking for innovation. Rather, he wants obedience and energy of execution in carrying out his orders. The addition of several current and former generals to the most senior levels makes the cupola of the GOC seem almost like a military junta. In a sense Fidel makes a good point in his "Reflexiones" piece. All of these individuals were solidly loyal to him too. They are neither "Fidel men" nor "Raul men" (or women). They obey whomever is in command and most go back to the beginnings of the revolution as comrades in arms of both Fidel and Raul. But it seems clear that the

current group makes Raul much more comfortable. Far from being a radical move in favor of change, this shakeup represents a radical shift back toward the original revolutionaries.

14. (C) CORRECTION: REFTEL omitted one significant change from the Monday announcement. Former Minister of Domestic Commerce, Marino Murillo Jorge replaced dismissed VP and Minister of Economy and Planning, Jose Luis Rodriguez Garcia, in both of his former capacities.  
FARRAR